

The Learning Circle

By Loren Woerpel, Noc Bay Publishing, Inc.

ATTACHING CONES

A reader has asked about the various ways small metal cones are attached to craft or apparel items. We have looked back over the years we have been doing this and can offer a few techniques and planning ideas. The use of small metal cones as a decorative piece goes back to the early trade period when metal items like these were introduced to native crafters as trade goods.

Today the small decorative cones are available in tin, aluminum, brass, and copper. Sizes vary from 1/2 inch in length to 1 1/4 inch. All are slightly smaller at the top than at the bottom. That fact is what is used to invent ways to make them stay where you want them to on either cloth or leather fringe.

Whether you use them on fringe that is already part of your design or whether you sew the fringe into an item after you mount the cone is something you need to plan after you learn the basic ways to attach cones.

The simplest look is just the dangled cone without any extension. If the fringe is attached to the item already and there isn't enough room to pull the fringe all the way through the cone and tie a knot, simply cut a small point on the fringe, push it into the top of the cone about half way down inside, and tightly flatten the top edge with a pliers.

A note about modern materials though. If your cone is plated, you can not use this flattening method as that flakes off the plating. This applies to silver plating as well as any other metal plating. The long nose pliers is another trick. They now are readily available with smooth metal inside jaws for jewelry making. It's best to use them instead of the ones found in a hardware store.

If you have enough room to extend the fringe through the cone, pull it out the other side. Using a scissors, cut the fringe in half down the center. Tie a knot. Then pull the knot back into the cone until it is snug. In this style, you can either cut off the fringe at the knot so it does not extend below the cone, or leave it long and let it extend for a double fringe extension look.

Other decorative materials like horse hair or ribbon can be attached to the fringe knot before pulling it into the cone. The plan has to be that you either attach the fringe to the item after you have positioned the cone end, or you have to plan enough room to do all this with the fringe attached to the item. That means you need to know your whole plan before you start cutting your pattern pieces.

One other way to use cones is to thread them on a fringe like a bead. In this style, the width of the fringe is planned to tightly hold the cone in place, but still allow you to pull it through the cone. To do this, make the fringe longer than needed. Using a scissors, cut a thin starting piece about as long as the cone. Thread the cone with the fringe point, put it into position, then cut off the fringe to the final planned length.

There are probably other ideas out there being used. Finding them is the challenge and the fun of crafting.



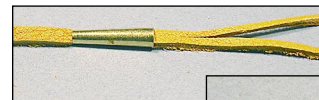
Woodland bag, early 1900's. Cones attached with knot and fringe sewn into the bag seam.



Plains style bag. Fringe added to bag through awl holes and cones crimped.



Crimp Method. Cones are crimped after threading fringe halfway into the cone. Crimp them with a jewelry pliers for cleanest look. A 1/16 inch wide crimp looks good.



Tie knot



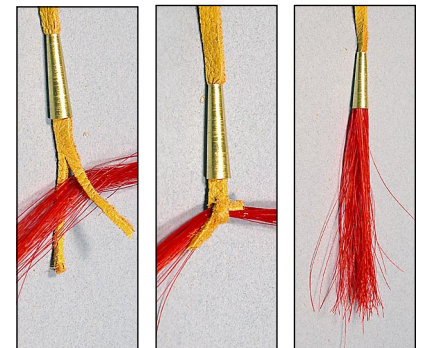
Inside knot method.



Pull cone down over knot



Cones are threaded on the fringe like beads.



Tie on a decoration and pull into cone.